
The MCA Advisory

The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America

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What's New on Our Website!
CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE EVERY MONTH
medalcollectors.org

Dues: \$30.00/year; 50.00/2 years

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Next meeting:
January 8, 2011, 12:00 noon
Waldorf Astoria Hotel, New York, City

From the Editor

We have been behind maintaining our membership list. As a result, quite a few of you became delinquent in your dues. However, after a gentle prodding, we are happy to report that we are now 166 fully paid members and growing apace. The club's treasury has likewise blossomed.

It is more of a chore to maintain a membership list than you might think. We are all indebted to Barry Tayman and Tony Lopez for tackling this challenge with gusto and leading us to the happy state that we now enjoy.

At our meeting in New York City on January 8th, ye editor will hold forth on the subject of the Admiral Vernon medals. Authors Adams and Chao view their recent book on the subject not as "the last word" but rather as a solid platform that will permit a cornucopia of future discoveries along many dimensions.

The meeting will also feature our first-ever fundraising auction. David Menchell is planning this event for which he seeks six to eight donated lots. If you think you have something appropriate, contact him at dmenchell@aol.com.

Changes in The Advisory

With the New Year, ye editor will be entering into full retirement. Whereas The Advisory has been printed on equipment at my place of employ, the change in my status will require new methodology if we are to keep costs down AND to retain the liberal use of color.

Perhaps the best alternative would be to deliver The Advisory electronically. However, fully one third of our membership has yet to submit their e-mail addresses to Tony Lopez tonycharl@comcast.com. Our best paper-based solution is to print each issue on the web and then deliver by regular mail. We will try

this approach but, in order to make things easier on the editor's end, will go to six issues per year rather than twelve. We do not anticipate any change in the total number of pages delivered.

We are pleased with the quality/quantity of articles that our members are submitting. If we had a wish for the coming year, it would be more book reviews, visits to museum collections and auction tracking. These are contributions that all of you can make, so why not give it a try. Ye editor rewards especially 'good efforts with a bottle of his home-made maple syrup.

Betts Medals (by John W. Adams)

The popularity of historical medals peaked in the 19th century. Gerard van Loon had written his magnificent opus on the medals of the Low Countries a bit earlier (1732) and the Marquess of Milford Haven had written his three volume treatise on naval medals a bit later (1919). However, such standard references as Hawkins' *Medallic Illustrations* (1885) and Betts' *American Colonial History* (1893) were the products of the nineteenth century. This was a time of great literacy in history such that numismatic authors took a much longer and/or broader view than would be the case today.

"Betts" covers medals relating to the colonization of the Western hemisphere from the period 1556 through 1783. Thus parts of four different centuries are involved along with medals from more than a dozen countries with legends in six different languages. To us in the twenty first century, this perspective is mind boggling.

Although there are a few radicals who would like to see "Betts" updated in its entirety, ye editor favors a more incremental approach. Readers should recall an outstanding article by David Menchell on the *Seven Years War* (1756-1763). The North American theatre of this war features the struggle between the English and the French for the mid-western territories and

Canada. Included in Betts between his numbers 403 and 447, most of these medals are eminently collectable. Mr. Menchell exhibited his collection featuring examples in silver at an ANA convention a few years back. Collectors on a stricter budget can acquire all of these medals in bronze at a relatively modest cost.

In subsequent issues of *The Advisory*, we plan to describe “bite sized” segments of Betts, along with the challenges and rewards involved.

Strong Prices at Simmons Gallery Mail Bid 50

(by Donald Scarinci)

Contemporary art medals brought strong prices in Simmons Gallery mail bid sale which closed on September 21, 2010. Two medals of the British art medal society highlighted the sale—*Diamond*, by Lynn Chadwick, BAMS 18, struck bronze, part burnished, 76mm, 1983, ed. of 128, sold for \$1585; and *Pyramus & Thisbe*, cast bronze, 90mm, BAMS 32, 1985, ed. of 38, by Geoffrey Clarke sold for \$1,030. The work of both sculptors is in the permanent display of the Tate Gallery, the Victoria & Albert Museum and other major art galleries of the world.

Diamond was first offered by BAMS in the Medal, no. 5, and was one of the Society's most popular offerings. According to BAMS, “The late Lynn Chadwick (1914 to 2003) was one of Britain's most distinguished living sculptors. His work has been seen in numerous international exhibitions and is represented in galleries around the world. This was his first medal. Thematically, it relates to the artist's large scale work of the period.” This is Chadwick's only medal and for most people it is the only affordable way to own a piece by this important sculptor.

Pyramus & Thisbe was first offered by BAMS in the Medal, no. 7. According to BAMS, “Clarke's reputation as a sculptor is international and his work is in numerous

public collections. He is a Royal Academician and his sculpture *Pyramus & Thisbe* was shown at the R.A.'s Summer Exhibition in 1985.” Clarke (born, 1924) has produced Medals commissioned by the UK Department of the Environment on the theme ‘Plant a tree in ’73’ as prizes for schools involved in the planting project as well as a second medal for BAMS, *Nature & Time* in 1999.

Simmons Gallery offered 172 lot highlighted by an offering of 53 medals of the British Art Medal Society (BAMS). “Some are being sold on behalf of BAMS and are the bequest of Peter Bagwell Purefoy to the British art Medal Society,” according to the catalog.

“This is altogether the best selection of BAMS medals we've had in years and a great opportunity to buy early BAMS issues as Peter was one of only three collectors to buy every medal from the beginning in 1982,” said Frances Simmons.

Simmons said, “In monetary terms, this is a tiny sale of not much more than USD 25K, but it is of importance as it appears to be the only specialist vehicle for auctioning the art medal properly. I think we had a tremendous result, especially for the British Art Medal Society. It stands to benefit from the sale of a bequest to the tune of more than USD 7000—a considerable boost to BAMS funds for the promotion of the art medal.”

Other highlights of the sale include *Samuel Pepys Esq.*, BAMS 20, struck bronze, 71.5mm, 1984 by Ronald Searle which sold for \$523 against an estimate of \$317. The two BAMS medals by Jane McAdam Freud, *Picasso*, BAMS 1, cast bronze 82x7pmm, 1982, ed. of 35, lot 1 in the sale, sold for \$523 against an estimated price of \$396 and *Sisyphus*, BAMS 61, cast bronze, 90x100mm, 1989, ed. of 61 sold for \$610 against an estimate of \$237.

In addition to the offering of 53 BAMS medals, the sale included 16 medals from the Dutch Art Medal Society, 40 medals from the Paris Mint and a nice cross section of

contemporary art medals from around the world.

Ron Dutton's medals predominantly from his middle period—1984 to 1987--brought strong prices in the first public auction of his work since he was awarded the J. Sanford Saltus award in 2009. *A Windy Day*, cast bronze, 275mm, 1984 formerly in the Lobban Vaughn collection, brought \$792. Three of his medals sold over 40 percent higher than the estimated retail prices listed in the catalog.

Some bargains could to be found in the sale, mostly by American artists, like 2010 ANA Medallion Art Award recipient, Ivanka Mincheva's, *Theater*, cast brass, 100x90mm, 1986, edition of 10, which sold for its estimate at \$150 and John Cook's, *Frank Lloyd Wright*, BAMS 34, cast bronze, 90 x80mm, 1985 which sold for \$261 against a low estimate of \$237. Amazingly, Heather Hays Blume's, *Ground Zero*, cast, 80mm, edition of 6, 2001 estimated low at \$150 did not sell.

Virginia Woolf—A Room of One's Own, BAMS 59, cast bronze, 94x79mm, 1989, edition of 63, by Leonda Finke sold at \$218 against an estimate of \$317 and *Saint Gaudens/Eakins*, BAMS 54, struck bronze 60mm, 1988, edition of 50, by Leonard Baskin, sold for \$140 against an estimate of \$190. Neither artist has an oeuvre of more than 20 medals. With the exception of Finke's, *Prodigal Son*, SOM 117, 1988, and Baskin's medal struck for the New York Public Library's 50th Anniversary in 1961, their medals have very limited editions and they are rarely offered for sale.

The sale along with the prices realized can be viewed on line at <http://www.simmonsgallery.co.uk/>. About 1/3 of the lots did not sell at their reserve and can be bought at the reserve by contacting Simmons Gallery at info@simmonsgallery.com. Simmons Gallery can also be reached at PO BOX 104, LEYTONSTONE, LONDON E11 1ND, UK

(Tel: 020 8989 8097 /International: 0044 20 8989 8097).



"Diamond" by Lynn Chadwick, cast bronze, 75mm, BAMS#18, 1983, ed of 100.



"Pyramus & Thisbe", by Geoffrey Clarke, cast bronze, 90mm, BAMS#32, 1985, ed. of 38



"Frank Lloyd Wright" by John Cook, cast bronze, 90 x 80mm, BAMS #33, 1985 ed. of 64

The British Art Medal Society (BAMS) was founded in 1982 and publishes a journal, "The Medal" twice a year. Members are required to buy one of five or six medals offered by the society each year as part of their membership requirement. For more information about BAMS see <http://www.bams.org.uk/>

Quebec Medal (by John W. Adams)

In the latest issue of The Numismatic Sun (#17), Dave Bowers cites a Louisburg medal that is not listed in Betts. The piece (illustrated below) appeared as lot 84 in Ford XIV, where it was described as follows: "Death of Wolfe, 1759, B-unlisted. Brass. 37.0mm. 184.1gms. Wolfe's half-length figure right with sword in right hand, THE BRAVE GENERAL WOLFE WAS KILLED SEP 18 1759; [reverse] Quebec under attack, BEFORE QUEBEC. Fine to very fine. Good color." The medal fetched a commendable \$5500.



Wolfe was killed in the battle before Quebec, a command which he received because of his excellent performance as second in command at the battle for Louisburg in 1758. In addition to historical links between the two battles, this particular medal bears some stylistic resemblance to the Boscawen/Louisburg medals, Betts 403 to 409.

By coincidence, there was a Betts 403 in silver—the first in this metal we have seen—in Anne Bentley’s recent (and marvelous) exhibition at the Massachusetts Historical Society. By further coincidence, another Betts 403 in silver appeared shortly afterward. This medal and the MHS piece are pictured below. The illustrations demonstrate quite well the kinship between the unique Wolfe medal and the Boscawen. It is not a flight of fancy to compare these in turn with the Vernon medals made just 20 years before.—Ed.



Silver Boscawen medal 003

Letters to the Editor

Muhl’s Suggestions (by Gerry Muhl)

Here are the following items I would like to see in the Medal Collectors news:

1. Lists of new medals from the U.S. Mint (also will they ever publish what other medals are available from them?)
2. New Issues from world mints.
3. New issues from private mints—perhaps info about various private mints.
4. Major medal shows (ANA, ANS, other)
5. Info about medalists currently working.
6. Info about upcoming medal auctions and sales.
7. Articles about historic medals.
8. A member’s want list page.
9. Ads from medal dealers
10. Post address as well as WEB Addresses.

Thanks for asking.

Gerry Muhl

P.S. 11. Book reviews on medal related publications.

Gerry,

These are all great ideas. How about volunteering to take on two or three?

John Adams

[Great suggestions!! How about some of you silent members stepping forward to pare down the list? We have a New Year coming up and a promise to contribute to *The Advisory* would make a wonderful resolution.—Ed]

Dear Mr. Adams,

We met more than a decade ago when you visited to study Fort Ticonderoga's modest numismatic collection. Congratulations on your new exhibit with Ms Bentley at the Mass Historical, and on your award last week from the Numismatic Bibliomania Society!

I am trying to track down a 1760 Montreal medal presented to Songose, a Mohican, and lost along the Mourning Kill near Ballston Spa, NY. The medal was recovered in September 1875 by one Mr. Kelly and published by the redoubtable William Beauchamp in 1903. Sadly, no one has ever attempted to build a database of the current whereabouts of the Indian (mostly Iroquois) artifacts published by Beauchamp during his decades of study. George Hamell, the now-retired curator at the NYS Museum suggests that you might have encountered the SONGOSE medal in the course of your own comprehensive study of numismatics in museum collections across the northeast.

I would be most grateful for any help you can offer.

Nick

Nicholas Westbrook
Director *Emeritus*, Fort Ticonderoga
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1911 Creek Road
Crown Point, NY 12928

Hi Nick –

The good news is that the medal is alive. The bad news is that it has been injured since last seen by Mr. Beauchamp.

It can be viewed in its current state as lot 47 in the John J. Ford Jr. Sale, part XVI, dated 10/17/06. There the provenance is given as "ex a Mr Kelly in 1875, Joseph Wescot, E.Hallenbeck in 1902, C. A. Laframposie, and Robert Brule on June 8, 1961". The obverse is apparently unaltered but the reverse has experienced a physical as well as a chemical scrubbing, such that Songose can be read only

by tilting the piece to the light (but it is definitely there). My guess is that Mr. Brule, who was once accused of removing items from the Chateau Rameszay, removed this medal from some other institution and then re-sold it to Ford, attempting to efface the original recipient's name for an all too obvious reason. If you believe the cataloguer's more sanguine explanation of the damage, you will have retained faith in the tooth fairy.

I am delighted to hear from you and happy to help.

Best,

John Adams

Vernon Section

Adams-Chao PB_V 50-YY

Another specimen of PB_V 50-YY turned up in England recently. Like most of this variety, the flan is rough, due either to the casting process or to the poor quality of the metal used. Indeed, the lovely example plated in *Medallic Portraits* is by far the best we have seen.

It would appear that PB_V 50-YY is unusual in a number of respects. For one its legends—BRAVE VERNON MADE US FREE on the obverse and NO SEARCH UPON THE SEAS SHAL (sic) BE on the reverse—are not to be found elsewhere in the series. For another, the “S” punch shows the heel of the “S” extending all the way into the body of the letter. For yet another, the design of the ships is unique with the flag on the stern so high that it appears to be another mast. [Note: this feature caused us to err in the text of *Medallic Portraits*, where the lower three ships should be one right/two left rather than the “two right/one left” as printed.]

As noted in *Medallic Portraits*: “The portrait is the thinnest and youngest in the series.” Clearly, this variety was executed well

out of the mainstream of other Vernon medals. Given the many novel aspects of the design, it is a pity that there are not more examples in high condition. The image below is well worth pondering; perhaps one of our readers can supply more of this variety's secrets.—Ed.



Issues of The Advisory

We have a (near) complete file of back issues of The Advisory. Some of these will be discarded at year end when ye editor moves his offices. Members may purchase any individual issue for \$5 and any year of issues for \$30. To submit an order contact Thelma Fisher at 617-371-3788 or thelma.fisher@canaccord.com